



Catawba County Public Health
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HOW TO STOP THE SUMMERTIME ITCH – AND PREVENT DISEASE IN THE PROCESS

HICKORY, N.C. – It's dinnertime and you're hungry. You've thrown some food on the grill and are ready for your meal.

Too bad you're also on the menu for about 60 species of mosquitoes. The annoying critters are out and about – and they're hungry for your blood.

In North Carolina, the mosquito population includes the common Asian tiger mosquito. Considered to be a pest animal, mosquitoes can be irritating and their itchy bites are a nuisance to people trying to enjoy outdoor activities. In some cases, though, they can be more than a pest and actually transmit diseases such as West Nile virus and the Zika virus, which has been in headlines across the Americas for the past few months.

The key to controlling mosquito population lies in their life cycle: They need water. If we eliminate places where they can lay their eggs, we prevent the next generation of critters from hatching.

Usually, the Asian tiger mosquito doesn't fly far. If you seem to be swatting these most often, it's likely that they are breeding somewhere close to you. If that's the case, let your neighbors know. If everyone in an area eliminates breeding areas, you should see a reduction in mosquitoes in your yard within few weeks.

NC State University's Department of entomology and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension recommends an easy technique for stopping mosquitoes from breeding called Tip and Toss. Around our homes and neighborhoods, we have a lot of places that hold water and harbor mosquito larvae such as bird baths, canoes, discarded tires, and plant pots. To Tip and Toss, we should get rid of things that can hold stagnant water. If you do use buckets or barrels, keep them covered with a screen to keep mosquitoes from entering and laying their eggs in them. Emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels, changing the water in pet dishes and replacing the water in bird baths weekly, drilling holes in tire swings so water drains out and keeping wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used are all ways of eliminating breeding places for mosquitoes. We should also make sure gutters are cleaned out so water drains from them properly.

Now that your yard is free of breeding grounds, it's time to have fun outdoors. With activities in mind, the CDC specifically recommends:

- Use repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, some oil of lemon eucalyptus or paramenthane-diol. Follow the directions on the package and reapply as needed.
- Because many species of mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn, consider wearing long sleeves and pants if you are going to be outside in those times.
- If you open your windows, make sure the screens are free of rips, tears and holes.

Catawba County Public Health, located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., works to protect and promote the health of all county residents. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth.

"Leading the Way to a Healthier Community"

